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ABSTRACT

A resource for adult educators, this guide was developed as a teacher aid to be used with "Learning Activities for Adults," a curriculum supplement developed by adult education teachers in Florida that is based on Florida's Minimum Student Performance Standards. This assessment and resource is divided into five general knowledge areas: adult learning, community development, curriculum design, instructional skills, and interpersonal relations. Each general knowledge area includes an introduction, a self-assessment, and information for the adult educator to use to assess his/her competencies and validate her/his skills and expertise. (KC)

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Teaching Adult Learners

An Assessment A Resource

Developed by
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Florida Atlantic University
Adult Education

In cooperation with
Adult Community Education Section
Florida Department of Education
Tallahassee, Florida 32304

1980

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PREFACE

Teaching Adult Learners is a resource for adult educators. It was developed as a teacher aide to be used with Learning Activities for Adults. Learning Activities for Adults is a curriculum supplement developed by adult education teachers in Florida and is based on Florida's Minimum Student Performance Standards.

The overall goal of Learning Activities for Adults is to enhance the potential for adult learners to develop literacy skills and meet the requirements of everyday life.

The self-assessment material used herein was developed through adult education teacher training activities conducted by Florida Atlantic University. Complete and enlarged self-assessment materials are contained within the (2) other publications completed under the direction of Arthur W. Burrichter, Ed.D. and Daniel L. Gardner, Ed.D., Florida Atlantic University. The publications are entitled Alternatives for Staff Development of Adult Educators and Adult Educator Self-Assessment Inventory.

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Project Resource Network

The project staff appreciates the contributions of the teachers, supervisors, administrators, D.O.E. staff, adult education students, and many friends and supporters whose involvement has made this project a learning and growing experience.

The project report which describes our involvement model recognizes many of these individuals and agencies. Listed here are those persons and agencies who contributed support and knowledge in staff development processes and needs.

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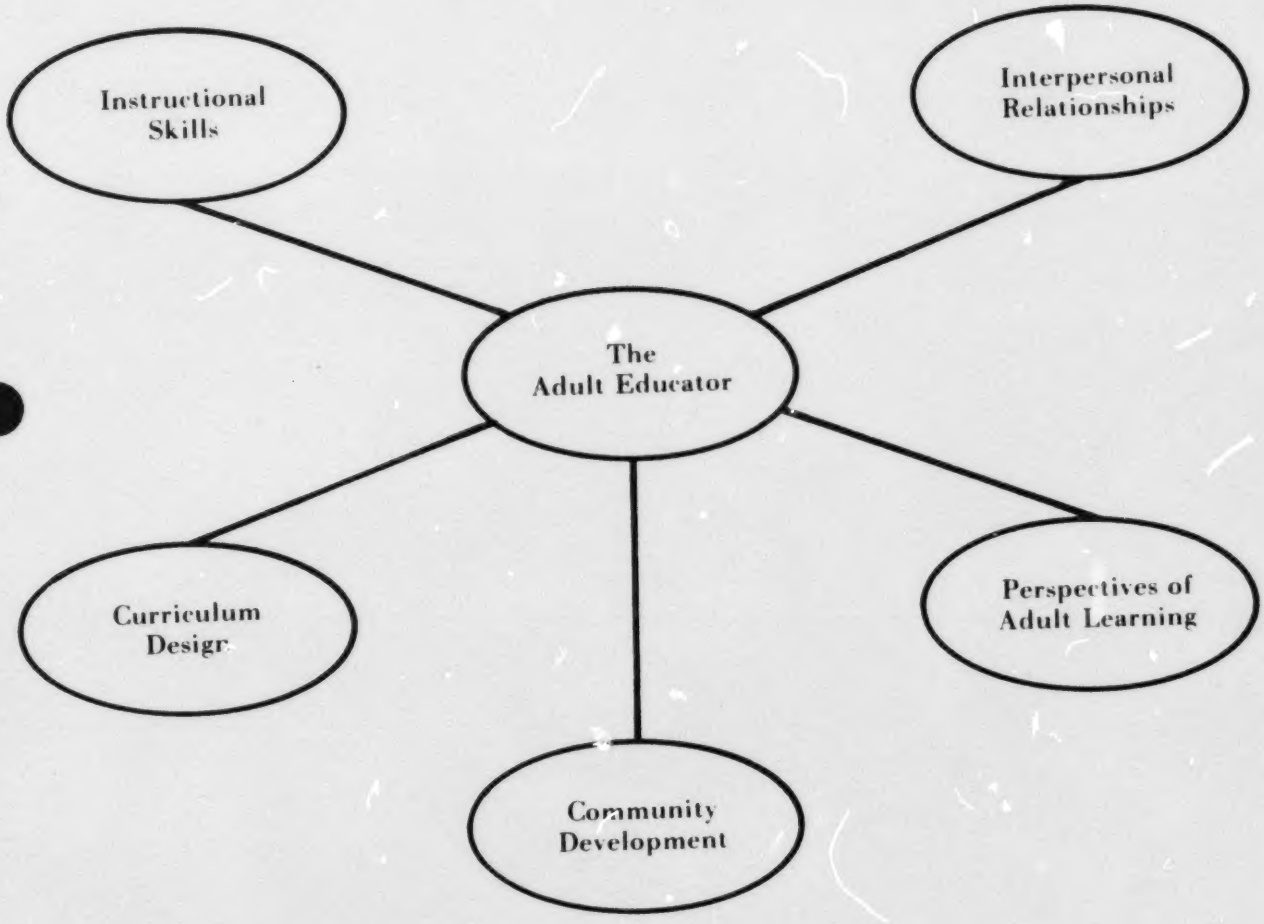
Introduction



A commitment to Adult Education is
a commitment to learning for self and others.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching adult learners is a rewarding experience. As teachers, we draw on knowledge of ourselves, the community, subject matter, teaching skills, and other resources to help adults learn. We establish a partnership with the learners that helps them become more independent and self-directed. These partnerships are enhanced when we understand the basic competencies involved in teaching adults.

Teaching Adult Learners seeks to enhance your partnerships by providing you an opportunity to assess your competencies as well as sharing information which can reinforce those knowledges and practices that are relevant to your needs and the needs of adult learners.

This assessment and resource has been separated into five general knowledge areas:

I Adult Learning
II Community Development
III Curriculum Design
IV Instructional Skills
V Interpersonal Relations

Each general knowledge area includes an introduction, a self-assessment, and information for you to assess your competencies and validate your skills and expertise. This format will help you explore areas of strengths and weaknessess.

This approach is based on adult learning theory which encourages the involvement of the learner in assessing his or her knowledge and suggests information and resources for further learning.

Self-study, professional development workshops, further education, and drawing knowledge from other adult educators and learners can help you and your students to learn. Learning, not necessarily schooling, is a lifelong process necessary in our rapidly changing world.

SUGGESTED USE

*You may want to keep pencil and paper handy so you can make responses to the assessments.

*After you have completed a section, make a note of questions you may have and list things you wish to know more about.

*After you have completed assessment in the five areas. complete the process with a self-summary, evaluation, and planning.

*Do this as is suggested in the Self-Assessment summary by

1. Reviewing each area of concern
2. Assessing your professional network
3. Reviewing selected resources
4. Completing a learning contract

Lifelong Learning is Personal
&
Professional Growth

Adult Learning

Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterwards.

Vernon Law

Experience is not what happens to you; it is what you do with what happens to you.

Aldous Huxley

We learn from experience. A man never wakes up his second baby just to see it smile.

Grace Williams

ADULT LEARNING

Both children and adults learn in similar ways. Yet, there are four concepts which are considered unique for adult learning. These concepts are self-concept, readiness to learn, experience and time-orientation. These concepts affect our understanding of the adult in the classroom as well as our perception of ourselves as lifelong learners. How do the four concepts relate to adult learners?

Self-Concept

Do you see yourself as an dependent or independent learner?

Although adults with low skills may be dependent on the instructor for information and guidance, they need to take responsibility for their own learning at the earliest stage possible.

Readiness to Learn

Think about the child learning to write. He needs to develop eye-hand coordination, muscular control, etc.

Does adults' "readiness to learn" depend on these types of developmental stages?

Adults are ready to learn skills and knowledges which they can apply and use in their everyday life. They do not learn as simply a preparation for life. The learning must be integrated into their present needs with a relevant relationship to their future goals.

Experience

Would you agree with this statement: Experience is a great teacher?

Adults, within the classroom, have diverse backgrounds and experiences. They can be a resource if you can develop, relate, respect and encourage each student to use them.

Experiences need to be know to break down barriers to learning. They need to be known as a basis to assess strengths and areas of interest.

Time Orientation

If someone told you to read a paragraph because they will ask you about it next year, would <u>you</u> be motivated?

The adults various roles in life, their goals, their occupational skills and needs all have immediate application for their learning. Even those adults with long range goals need to understand how what they are learning can relate.

For adults it is more appropriate to teach them to make a plow, plant a field, harvest the food and use it in nutritious ways, than to provide them a meal a day, forever.

In meeting the needs of adu. learners it may be important to view yourself as a learner. Your attitudes, experiences and knowledges are reflected in the classroom in the same way as attitudes, experiences, and knowledges are intertwined in your students' learning.

Consider the following questions:

> How do I as an adult educator:
>
> 1. develop conditions which facilitate learning?
> 2. demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning?

Response

1. _____

_____

_____

_____

2. _____

_____

_____

_____

*What are the conditions that facilitate learning?

Consider these:

a. suitable learning environment.

b. reinforcement of positive attitudes toward learning.

c. assisting learners to develop positive attitudes toward lifelong learning.

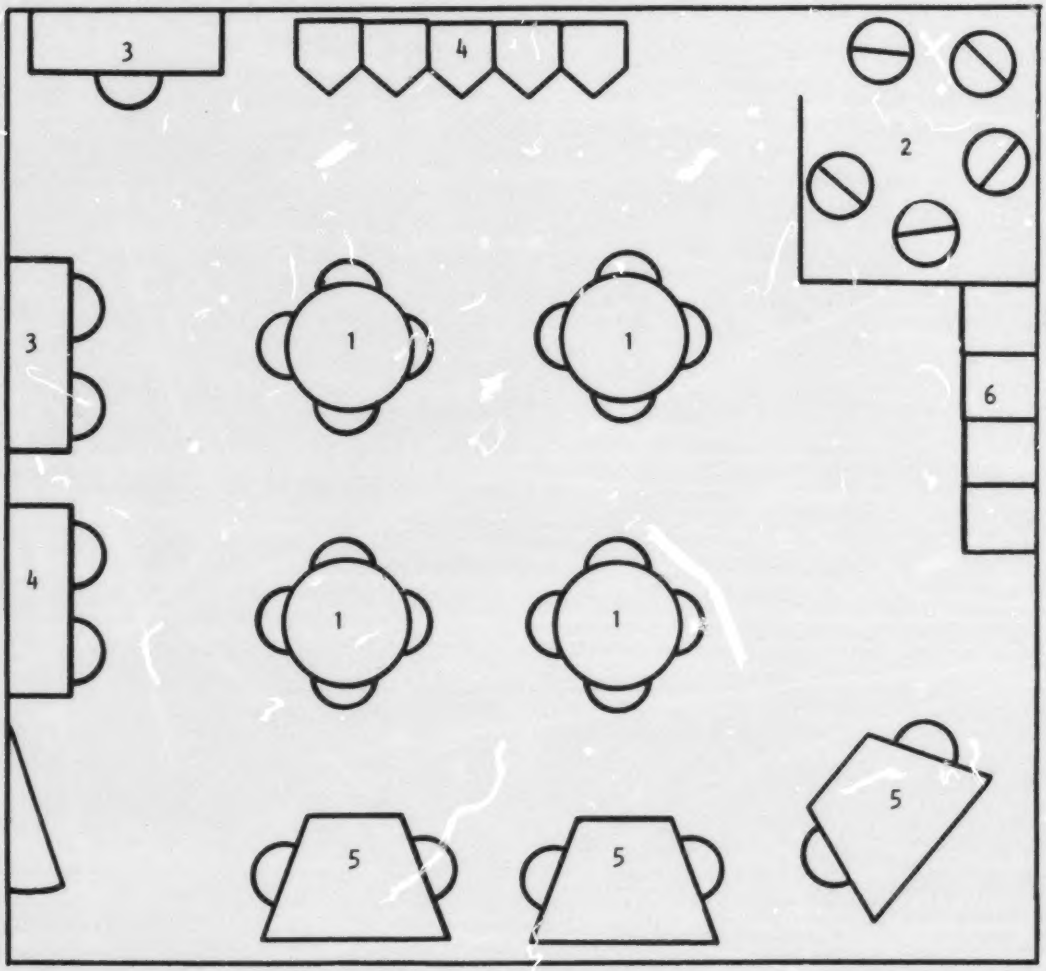
d. relationships between learning and immediate application.

e. recognition of signs of the potential drop out.

A suitable learning environment is both physical and attitudinal.

Physical Learning Environment:

Consider the diagram below as a physical environment that can maximize multiple uses and needs within the classroom.



1. Small group discussion areas can be used for total group activities.
2. Relaxation - interaction area.
3. Research - learning center area.
4. Independent work area.
5. Tutor - student area.
6. Filing - resources

POSITIVE ATTITUDES

What are <u>your</u> attitudes about learning? Consider the following:

Do you participate in staff development?

Read professional literature?

Enroll in courses?

Participate actively in your profession?

Your attitudes are models for your students. If you enjoy learning, that enthusiasm and commitment may transfer to them.

Do you share learning with your students?

Remember, the fact that the adult has come to your classroom is an important step. The physical learning environment and your enthusiasm for learning can be important factors in the steps that follow.

Do you utilize the adult's experiences in planning, decision-making, and learning?

REMEMBER

The adult has a need to be an independent learner.

Their experiences may be broader than yours and a resource for their own learning and that of you and other students.

Their time orientation demands immediate usage of their skills.

Their self-concept may be low and their need for success high.

They are often ready learners when involved in determining their goals and relating their learning to their immediate needs.

Community Development

Who is a wise man? He that learns from all men.

Talmud

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

As an adult educator, you are an important member of the community that serves the needs of both the learner and the community. You are a partner in community development. You develop and maintain valuable human resources.

The community members and agencies are a valuable resources for the classroom, the program, the student, and you. They provide space for classes, information which is relevant and necessary to student needs, and support for recruitment of students.

However, this relationship must be mutual to be effective.

Adult Education plays an active role in the community. It has a role in coordination, cooperation, service, and training. The community influences you, your program, and the learner.

SELF ASSESSMENT

Do I as an adult educator:

1. understand the purposes of adult education within the community?
2. assist individual adjustment to the changing nature of our society?

YES? NO? MAYBE?

If you had to "sell" adult education to your community what would be your strategy? (Develop some ideas and put them in your notes)

_____

_____

How does adult education benefit a state or community economically?

_____

_____

How can enriching the lives of adults benefit our communities?

_____

_____

ECONOMICS

The costs of illiteracy permeates all aspects of our government and community. Those with less education generally make less money, have greater social service needs and have greater health needs. That can mean they have less to spend on goods and services, require more in welfare dollars and may suffer illnesses without the means to maintain good health.

In other words, we will pay for illiteracy one way or another.

COMMUNITY

Are you aware of community agencies? Can you as an adult educator help provide information and involve those agencies in meeting the total needs of your learners.

Is the community aware of adult education and its services?

Name 3 programs other than your own which adult education provides in the community:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Name 3 agencies that serve or can serve the needs of your students:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Do you know enough about them to help your students? yourself? the community?

If at first you don't succeed you're running about average.

M. H. Alderson

Curriculum Design

Questions are the creative acts of intelligence.

Frank Kingdon

CURRICULUM DESIGN

Introduction

Curriculum is more than a textbook or worksheet; it is more than content. Curriculum is a process which enables you and the learner to realize potential, enrich the community, and provide for self-fullfillment.

The learner's needs and experiences, the community needs and resources, your skills and expertise all impact the curriculum process.

SELF ASSESSMENT

Do I as an adult educator:
1. develop and organize curriculum reflecting the needs of adult learners.
2. develop appropriate goals and objectives for adult programs.

Response

1. Consider your curriculum. Has it been purposefully developed? Did you have input? Is it satisfactory to you and to your students?

_____

_____

2. What are your goals and objectives? Are they strictly content oriented? Do you understand their relationship and impact on the individual? the community?

_____

_____

Designing curriculum for adult learners involves both objective and subjective approaches. Objective approaches directly relate to skills assessment. Subjective approaches relate to how well we are able to assess the total needs of the adult. Are they able to set goals? Can they communicate their thoughts and feelings? How do other roles and responsibilities affect their learning? The adult students have diverse backgrounds and come from varying age groups. Each may be at different stages of career and personal development.

Before we discuss more specific curriculum concerns, examine these three students.

John Better, age 18, lived in the community all his life, dropped out of school in 10th grade. Has worked on and off at jobs like dishwasher, etc. He has had difficulty in filling out student information forms. He has stated that he wants to pass the GED examination.
Louise Homemaker, age 40, widow, 2 children, 14 and 17. She needs a high school diploma and hasn't worked in 15 years. She wants to obtain a job.
Bob Retired, age 65, never got his diploma, managed to support a large family, is retired, and has stated that he wants to improve his skills.

If each of these students were to appear in your classroom, you would utilize your curriculum to help them achieve their goals.

But what is curriculum? Is it strictly content? Think about the following elements along with the three students.

_____ a. varying ability levels

_____ b. identified needed topics and concepts within subject areas

_____ c. personal interests of students

_____ d. employment skills

_____ e. stimulation of high levels of aspiration

_____ f. curriculum evaluation by students

_____ g. opportunities for curriculum development for students

_____ h. adult developmental characteristics

_____ i. learners formulating goals

_____ j. learning objectives with measurable outcome

_____ k. adult learning theory

Which of the above are included in your curriculum? Now, how about our three students? If you left any element out, would you have ignored their self-concept needs, experience, readiness to learn, or time orientation.

No one element can supersede the other, each must be integrated, flexible, and constantly up-dated and individualized.

For John - goal setting may be priority;

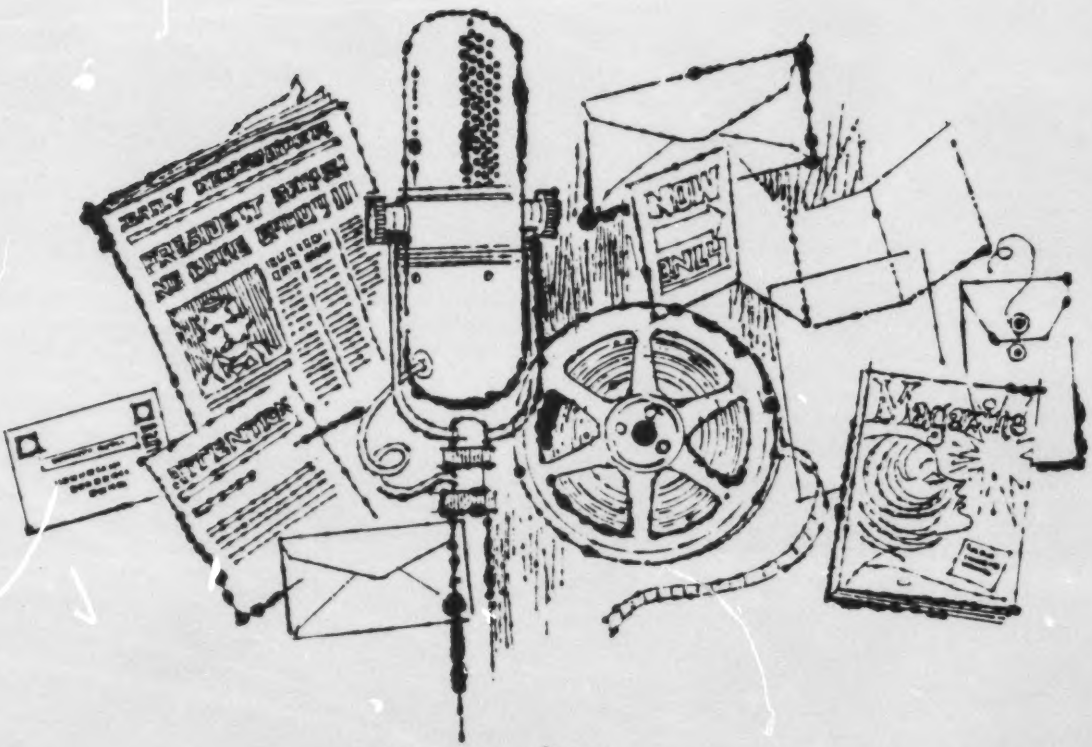
while for Louise - immediate employment skills;

yet, Bob's needs, while content oriented, must take personal interests and experience into account.

I have 13 dependents. All of them have 140 IQ or better, except me. I'm under 100 and I support them all.

Chi Chi Rodriquez

Instructional Skills



Just as we can throttle our imagination, we can likewise accelerate it. As in any other art, individual creativity can be implemented by certain "techniques".

Alex F. Osborn

INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS

Utilization of appropriate instructional skills depends upon your knowledge of adult learning styles, your experience, the instructional setting, and the human and curriculum resources available to you.

Instructional skills involve knowledges in assessment and methods. A variety of options exists which can help you and your students. Often, we choose only those options with which we have had direct experience instead of diversifying to utilize new or untried assessments and methods.

Consider the story of the truck driver who was on his way to a particular business address. On arriving at the correct street, he noticed it was marked one-way against him. He proceeded along one more block then circled around to approach the street in the correct direction. Not until he was within a few yards of his destination did he realize he was on foot.

Preoccupation with a certain set of instructional techniques is not appropriate in adult education. We need to make adjustments as students' needs change. The appropriate assessment device or method may change as student needs change and as new processes become available. However, as adult educators we must be willing to recognize, up-date, and modify our skills.

SELF ASSESSMENT

Do I as an adult eductor:		
1. assess learning needs?		
2. use relevant and effective instructional methods?		
YES?	NO?	SOMEWHAT?

TECHNIQUES FOR ASSESSMENT

Just as we come to a learning environment with good and bad learning experiences and habits, so do our students. It takes a variety of assessments to recognize and clarify learning needs.

How do you accomplish the following?

1. diagnose entry level knowledge and skills.

_____

_____

2. provide performance-based assessment.

_____

_____

3. provide for learner self-evaluation.

_____

_____

4. recognize symptoms of physical deficiencies that hinder performance.

_____

_____

5. provide for feedback to learners on educational progress.

_____

_____

6. keep records of class and individual progress.

_____

_____

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Instructional Methods for our purposes refers to the processes and techniques used to organize people for learning experiences. These methods vary from individual to individual. The choice of a particular method or technique depends on learner needs, program design, community resources, and your own personality and abilities. The range of techniques and methods runs from lecture through self-study facilitation. It includes knowledges in group development, role playing, managing effective discussions, and sequencing of learning experiences. Consider the following:

DO YOU

_____ 1. communicate in a coherent and logical manner.

_____ 2. use sequential, relevant short-range instructional objectives.

_____ 3. assist adult learners in development of problem-solving skills.

_____ 4. apply instructional techniques which use the talents, abilities, an experience of group members.

_____ 5. assist adults in the development and use of learning skills.

_____ 6. provide practical activities for learning.

_____ 7. adjust instructional techniques to meet immediate learning needs.

_____ 8. promote self-directed learning.

Review the above list again, place a (✓) check next to those items in which you may need improvement or new information.

Knowing is not enough; we must apply.
Willing is not enough; we must do.

Goethe

Interpersonal Relationships

Inside myself is a place where I live all alone and that's where you renew your springs that never dry up.

Pearl Buck

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The ability to maintain effective interpersonal relationships affects all areas of our lives. The perfect learning environment, great community support, effective instructional skills, and well-planned curriculum can all be sabotaged by poor teacher-student relationships.

As the saying goes, "Nothing succeeds like success", and that success can depend upon how you effectively communicate your respect for the learner and his needs.

SELF ASSESSMENT

Do I as an adult educator:		
1. develop effective working relationships with adult learners?		
2. exhibit behavior reflecting a feeling for the dignity and worth of the individual.		
YES?	NO?	SOMEWHAT?

Effective working relationships depend on:

a. mutual respect
b. constructive interaction
c. effective communication
d. reinforcement techniques
e. group dynamics
f. ability to make changes as a response to constructive criticism
g. freedom to express ideas

None of these things happen by chance. You <u>plan them</u>, <u>evaluate them</u>, and <u>encourage them</u>.

Can you:

1. Accept comments of adult learners with a positive attitude?

   YES NO SOMEWHAT

2. Effectively solicit comments and expressions of adult learners?

   YES NO SOMEWHAT

3. Relate effectively to people from a variety of cultural, economic, and occupational backgrounds?

   YES NO SOMEWHAT

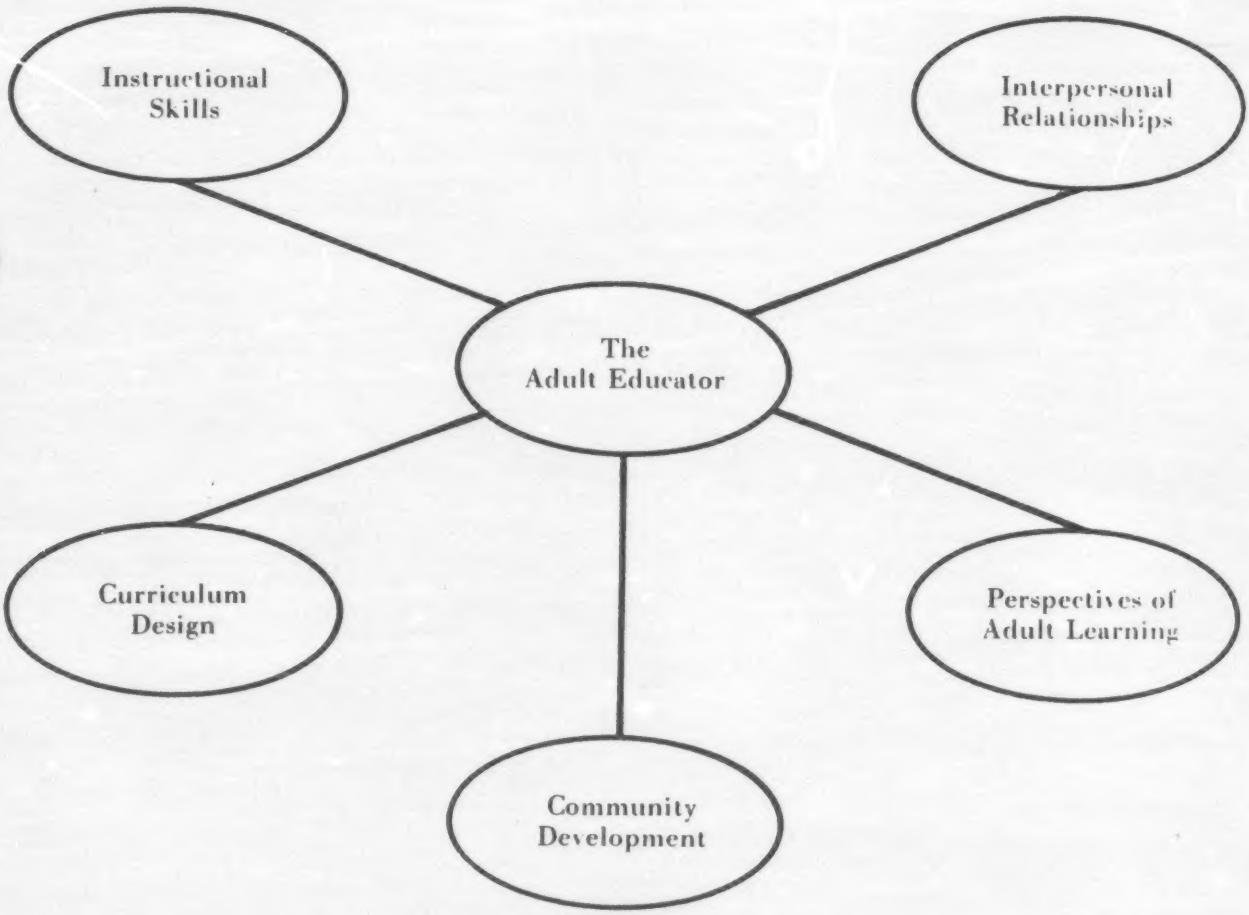
4. Assist in developing positive self-concepts by designing "success" opportunities for each learner?

   YES NO SOMEWHAT

You can't be <u>responsible for</u> all learning, feeling and communication within the classroom. The learner has a major and equally important role.

You can be <u>responsive</u> to that learner so that they may fulfill their learning needs in a constructive environment.

Summary and Resources



Teaching Adult Learners has invited you to examine your competence as an adult educator in five broad areas of concern.

I Adult Learning
II Community Development
III Curriculum Design
IV Instructional Skills
V Interpersonal Relationships

In assessing your competence within any of the areas, you may have found specific items or even a whole area in which you would choose to update your information or acquire different skills. In this section we have provided two approaches plus resources.

1. A Learning Contract
2. Network Development

Review each area of concern, assess your professional network, review the selected resources. Consider completing the Learning Contract as an approach to acquiring the level of competency you desire.

A PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

What is a professional network?

It is a purposefully developed and maintained group of people who exchange ideas, information, resources, and support.

Why is a network helpful to adult educators?

1. It helps you personally:

   One who maintains a successful support group has the means by which to enhance and satisfy their needs, relieve their stress, learn, and grow.

2. It helps your students:

   You can obtain needed resources, new ideas and techniques, and exchange information that can help students meet their needs.

   It is a model of good planning, successful problem-solving, and risk-taking. You ask for what you need. You develop relationships that help you reach goals. You offer your experience and expertise.

3. It enhances your program:

   You know your community and those in your agency, the state, and the professional associations who can add relevant materials, input, and support. They know you and thereby can choose to trust the credibility and value of the total program. You promote. You share information. You provide program models.

4. It promotes community understanding and support:

   When you express needs to the community, you help to meet your needs, student needs, and program needs.

   When you help meet community needs you invite communication, understanding, and support. You enhance your position in the community and in your profession.

Who is in a professional network?

There are many different ways of defining the elements of a network.

Consider these:

1. Intimates - These are friends, relatives, children, etc. They provide you with personal acceptance and support. They promote you as an individual.

   These can also be negative forces. They must be informed of changes that may take place in you. You must express your needs to them. You need to listen to them and maintain their positive effects on you.

2. Role Models - These may be people you know at work, in the community, or in your profession in general who present models of behavior, administration, instructional method, etc. from which you can learn.

   You must understand both the positive and negative aspects of their traits. Are you admiring educators who works 24 hours a day and fail to take good care of themselves? Are you expecting something of yourself that is realistic?

3. Mentors - Mentors can best be described by what they do. They listen. They share critical information. They promote you personally and professionally. They need to be selected, developed, and maintained.

   You give them validation of their ideas, enthusiasm, and an opportunity to share and grow.

How do you develop a professional network?

You can begin by assessing what you want, defining your purpose, and knowing who in your present environment would already be included.

A "Network Assessment" sheet has been provided. Note how much time you spend with the positive and negative forces in your sphere. Note those people with whom you need to develop your relationships.

Do you have a sufficient support group to provide you with acceptance, information, support, criticism, and enthusiasm?

Where can these elements be found?

Everywhere.
In your home or community.
Through active membership in community organizations.
Through active membership in professional associations.

I WHAT I NEED/WANT/DREAM:

_____

_____

_____

II PURPOSE OF MY NETWORK:

_____

_____

_____

III ELEMENTS IN MY NETWORK:

✓ UNDERSTANDS MY GOALS + POSITIVE FORCE - NEGATIVE FORCE * NEEDS DEVELOPMENT

INTIMATES				ROLE MODELS				MENTORS			
NAME	✓	±	*	NAME	✓	±	*	NAME	✓	±	*

LEARNING CONTRACT

Consider making this contract with another person.

I. What is the skill or information you want? _____

_____

II. What will "happen" as a result of obtaining this new knowledge?

_____

_____

III. What steps do I need to take to accomplish this? (Book to read, people to contact, course to take, etc.)

	Action Step	Target Date
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____

IV. What obstacles might I let get in my way? (Time, money, other people, self-image, experience)

_____

_____

V. Reward: What do I get when I finish? _____

_____

VI. Penalty: What if I don't finish? _____

COMPLETION DATE: _____

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